

# Media Release

**The Hon Gayle Tierney MP**  
Minister for Training and Skills  
Minister for Higher Education  
Minister for Agriculture



Friday, 18 August 2023

## **FREE TAFE HELPING MORE VICTORIANS ACHIEVE WORLD-CLASS SKILLS**

Hundreds of competitors from across the vocational training sector have gathered in Melbourne to showcase their skills at the nation's largest trade competition, made possible by the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney today met with apprentices, trainees and students from across the state who are competing at the 2023 WorldSkills Australia National Championships, demonstrating their talent across more than 50 disciplines including carpentry, hairdressing, cyber security and health services.

Ballarat local Tara Kelly will bring her talent to the WorldSkills floor when she represents Victoria in cabinetmaking, competing against other young trainees and apprentices from across the country.

We're making sure every Victorian has access to the training they need for the job they want, with the Labor Government investing \$186 million to extend the eligibility of Free TAFE through the *Victorian Budget 23/24*.

Every Victorian is eligible for fee-free training no-matter their existing qualification level and we've removed the one course limit on Free TAFE participation within the same priority pathway.

Free TAFE has removed the barriers for training for a great new career for more than 137,000 students – saving students almost \$340 million since the program began in 2019. More than 80 courses and short courses are available across Victoria as part of Free TAFE.

Bayside P12 College student Beau Brown-Russell is volunteering as a judges' assistant at WorldSkills to see his peers in action, as he studies his Certificate II in Building and Construction Pre-apprenticeship. With plans to study Free TAFE's Certificate II in Electrotechnology, Beau is getting the training he needs for the career he wants.

We're also backing the growth of Victoria's clean energy future, with a new dedicated short course Working Safely in the Solar Industry to help more people get the skills they need to drive Victoria's renewable energy future.

Supported by Apprenticeships Victoria, the WorldSkills national championships are the final testing ground for Australian competitors before next year's international competition, with selected medallists invited to join Australia's Skillaroos team. The national team will train for the 2024 International WorldSkills competition in France.

More than 20,000 visitors are expected to visit the WorldSkills competition and the Victorian Careers and Employment Expo this weekend at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in Docklands.

To find out more about Free TAFE and expanded eligibility visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/free-tafe>.

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Training and Skills Gayle Tierney**

*"Victoria's TAFE and training system is world-class, and our apprentices, trainees and students are showcasing the results of their training at the WorldSkills Australia National Championships."*

### **Quote attributable to Member for Albert Park Nina Taylor**

*"We're proud to host Australia's largest trade competition and celebrate the talents of all our apprentices, trainees and students."*

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**Quote attributable to Beau Brown-Russell**

*“I love doing building and construction because it is a lot of physical work while also having to use mental skills like maths. It also opens up opportunities to other trades that are used on a worksite.”*